Benalla Inc.

Newsletter – May, 2026

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President's Report

The first Meet and Mingle meeting since the AGM was held on 15 April 2026. We had a most engaging presentation - *'U3A Benalla 30 Years'* - from Carmyl Winkler about U3A Benalla Inc., which has been going since 1996. An earlier attempt was made in 1988, but to no avail. Carmyl gave us an insight into how the group first got started.

U3A Benalla Inc. has now been operating for 30 years—a real credit to those members who met in 1996. We were fortunate to have two long-serving members at the presentation: Shirley Kearney and Margaret Walsh. I'm sure they could share many stories from over the years.

We have a booklet *'U3A Benalla Inc – 30 Years'* with details about the group, past to present. If you would like a copy, it is available for $5—very interesting reading. If you know of members who might like one, please contact either Heather Wallace or myself (Anne Nelson 0438 447 379).

There have been many changes as U3A Benalla has grown. I am so proud to be its new President.

At last count we have 459 members. Our membership data base, designed by Terry Dillon, has been maintained by Len Jeffers for a number of years, serving our needs very well. After serious consideration, in late 2025 the Committee decided to introduce a new membership data system, "Member Wizard," which is supported by U3A Network Victoria. This is a step forward for us as we keep up with modern technology. Fortunately, we have Committee members who can help guide the process and members who have volunteered to be involved. It will take time and won't happen overnight - "patience and perseverance" are the key words.

Until next month, thank you all for reading the newsletter.

Anne Nelson, President

Group Reports

A Taste of Art

We had a wonderful afternoon in the gardens in April, some members were sketching and some were painting. It was perfect weather with lots of different areas to find subjects to draw, such as the bridge and lake, the cenotaph, huge variety of trees and plants, one even tried the Weary Dunlop statue.

All eight of us decided we wanted to do more drawing and painting outside so we could experience working from nature. Everyone enjoyed it so much. I'm hoping to organize another 'en plein air' day soon!

Carol Perry

American History

The Gilded Age in the USA, roughly from the 1870s to the 1890s, was an uncertain and transformative time with rapid industrialisation, economic boom, mass immigration, urbanisation, labour unrest, political corruption, etc, that created powerful monopolies, deep social unrest and inequality. The creation of the Populist Party aimed to shift economic and political power back toward ordinary Americans, while the rise of Theodore Roosevelt to the presidency in 1901 after the assassination of William McKinley (the third president to be assassinated) brought fresh energy to the nation.

On May 5th, the Progressive era and America's involvement in World War 1 will be covered, involving some discussion, short lectures and videos.

Barb Rogers

Art Appreciation

There was no First Monday in April because of Easter.

At our May Art Appreciation gathering we will hear from King Valley artist **Anita Laurence** as she talks about her practice and her exhibition.

Pop-Up Art Gallery Public Programs - Anita Laurence - Monday 4 May 10am – 75 Bridge Street.

Neville Gibb

'As Time Goes By' – Memoir Writing

'Moments That Matter'

Artificial Intelligence (AI) was a thread woven through the tapestry of our April meeting.

Would it be a silver thread that illuminates or a discordant distraction?

Research via ChapGPT sourced by Bev in 2024, offered twenty-two common features of memoir writing'. From 'personal catharsis' and 'self-reflection' to 'recording change' and 'preserving culture' provided insights as to why we are inspired to 'do what we do'.

Jenny's 'treasure' was her dad's backyard shed. Brimming with reclaimed bed frames and blue pavers which now creatively form the contours of a delightful garden.

Barry's 'treasure' was in the form of a photo of himself and his 'Uncle Pat'. It accessed memories of his first solo and successful fishing trip at the age of five. Remembering the annual Mardi Gras in Stanhope produced a treasure trove of memories for John. Dress-ups, floats and billy-cart races followed by an evening dance coloured the proceedings. 1986 was the last Mardi Gras, John offered us a poignant conclusion to his memoir.

'The moment I knew' invited us to experience three very different journeys. Dislodged from their horses and in the mud, Heather realised, in that moment, 'Ken was the one'. On the other hand, Jan, in her moment, realised he was not 'the one'. Meanwhile for Robyn, a job in Melrose Scotland was the job for her.

Finally, Carmyl shared how two years in Aceh shaped her life. and Merv led us mischievously into the dark world of ArtSpeak.

The theme for our next session is 'Things Fall Apart – Loss and Learning'; the topics *'Failure'*, *'Heartbreak'* or *'The Toughest Year of My Life'.* Full details are available on the topic list and on the website.

Graham Jensen

Australian Shares & Stock Market

As We Marched into April, the Share Market had some Ups, some Downs

With Easter and school holidays we had 11 members attend. Easter Bunny visited after morning tea break with some chocolate eggs, followed by some informative background on beta shares by Jo Wise.

Jo's selection Code "OOO' on the **monthly sheet** was a standout during March. "OOO' code is a **BETASHARES CRUDE OIL INDEX CURRENCY HDG COMPLEX ETF.** On 2nd March they were $6.34 and at the end of trading today 7th April were $10.54 up 9.4% today.

"Jo explained that Beta bit of the ETF (Exchange Traded Fund.) Betashares Capital Ltd is the company that administers "the fund" - a packet of shares (or properties) in an industry or sector that make the fund. So, if you have OOO you have shares in crude oil businesses, not in Beta. Beta have a range of ETFs they manage.

A competitor is Global X. Have a look at ACDC ETF - it is an ETF in battery technology managed by GlobalX (Australia) Ltd. If you have them on a CommSec watchlist, scroll down past the graphs to news and announcements and have a look - the PDS or financial report will list all of the ETF s they administer. Hope this helps, Cheers, Jo"

This link provides more information - www.marketindex.com.au/asx-etfs

During March the market was up and down, highlighted in a video from CommSec about this unpredictability as shown with the 2 slides below.

On the Long -Term sheet Margaret J leads with RIO; on the monthly sheet Jo leads with OOO and on the Real Time Trading sheet Nola is ahead with STO. All dividends have been added except for NAB, LTR due in May. Both Peter's NVDA and Brent's AFL are unlikely to announce any dividend. Jo, Brent, and Bill have all selected new stock to watch on the monthly sheet. On the Real Time Trading Jeanette has traded MAH to WAM and Brent from AFL to ARG.

To all who were away and wish to change/trade their selections, please let me know in the next few days.

Our May meeting will be back to normal being Monday 4th May at 2pm.

Malcolm Sanders

Be Connected – Tech Advice (Apple)

Over the last three months 2 people have availed themselves of some Apple Tech help.

Using the email app has been the focus of assistance. That includes compiling the Contact list, Composing, Sending and Deleting.

There is no set time for this one-on-one assistance. If you feel you would like some help with either your Apple Phone or Apple iPad, then you can contact me and we'll make a mutually convenient time to try and sort out your tech problem at the Benalla U3A.

Jenny Sawyer Phone- 0409545182

Birdwatching

Next outing - Shadforth Reserve, Violet Town on Thursday 14th May 2026

Shadforth Reserve is on the northern edge of Violet Town and has had previous lives as a racecourse and golf course. It features some ancient eucalypts and areas of native grassland and shrubs and is managed by a committed team of volunteers working to enhance its natural values. Autumn brings flowering Grey Box and Ironbark trees, so we should see a good variety of birdlife during our visit.

Please meet in the car park behind the Benalla Seniors Community Centre at 9am. As usual, wear sturdy footwear, and bring water and any food you need for the morning. If you can bring binoculars, they will greatly enhance your ability to see the birdlife.

Report of visit to Nason Springs, in the Warby-Ovens National Park

With thunderstorms a possibility, we went ahead with our visit to Nason Springs in April and only copped one brief but heavy shower during the visit.

On arrival we walked along the track adjacent to a gully, watching Dusky Woodswallows and Welcome Swallows no doubt catching insects as they flew overhead. A family group of Olive-backed Orioles was feeding above us in a seeding Kurrajong tree, extracting seeds from the large seedpods.

Other birds observed included a group of Red-pumped Parrots, a pair of Eastern Rosellas and some Superb Fairy-wrens. We then headed into the adjacent paddock, and managed to find a group of Peaceful Doves, perched nearby on some fallen tree branches. Their light grey-brown colours blended beautifully with those branches and provided great camouflage. Thanks to Andi Stevenson for putting together her photo and an illustration from a birding field guide by way of explanation, as well as information on the olive backed oriole. These and other photos are available on our Birdwatching web page:–

Afterwards we enjoyed a café visit in Glenrowan where coffee and scones finished off an enjoyable morning.

Link to bird list on eBird https://ebird.org/checklist/S326802950

Kathy Costello

Brain Games - Neurobics

We exercised our senses and memory.

Mental flexibility helps when trying to see patterns and links in words and shapes, or different tricks to solve puzzles.

Specialist areas of the brain share tasks and can even take over in the event of damage, so it's good to know we're building useful reserves of mental muscle.

Elspeth Maconachie

Car Torque

At Car Torque I try to source our Car of the Month from local owners that have interesting and often unique cars garaged out of public sight that rarely see the light of day.

However, in April that was not quite the case. Local Rob Evans brought along his beautiful looking restored1949 Morris 8/40 Z utility. Rob bought the car in 1997 as a promo for his then new Benalla Car Wash business. After a respray and some mechanical work Rob was ready to see if the sign on wheels was a success. It certainly was and still is. Rob is regularly seen driving to and from his Car Wash in his head turner "look at me car" with its sign "Hot Car Wash".

Rob spoke about his car's specifications.

- The utility version is much rarer, since it was a regional adaptation.
- Today survivors are uncommon
- Engine: ~918 cc side-valve inline-4 (from Morris Eight)
- Power: ~23–26 hp
- Gearbox: 3-speed manual
- Suspension: Leaf springs (rear), simple beam/independent front depending on version
- Brakes: hydraulic (depending on build)
- 2-door steel cab with open tray
- Very basic interior (minimal instrumentation)
- Narrow track and small size compared to later utes
- Designed for Tradespeople, Rural/light farm work

Our group also engaged with and enjoyed a 21-question multiple choice answers car trivia quiz base around Australian Cars.

The session ended with some hilarious Jeremy Clarkson YouTube videos (Most watched pranks - Jeremy Clarkson) that brought quite a bit of laughter from the group.

Keep your hands on the steering wheel.

Doug Smith

Chat n' Chew

Our April get-together at the **Benalla Golf Club,** as always, featured great food and great company.

Unfortunately, a number who booked forgot as it was early in the month. May will be even earlier - on the 8th - so make sure you pop it in your diaries.

We will be lunching at **Kim Wah Chinese Restaurant** at 12 noon.

For bookings text or call me on 0412263071

All welcome!

Dorothy Webber

Coin Collectors

Several of our new members were particularity interested in some of the topics we had previously covered in past years, so our April meeting went back to basics to revisit some aspects of coin collecting.

We covered the topic of Error and Variety coins. An Error Coin is a product of the minting process. A Variety Coin is the product of the die and die making process. The saying is "any coin that looks different is worth exploring further".

To make it simple we called all coins Error Coins whether they were Error/Variety examples. Some of the common "error coins" looked at included

- Wave gap on 20c piece (pictured above)
- Double Bar on 1966 50c piece
- Wavy 2 on 1966 20c piece
- Skinny leg on number 7 50 cent piece
- Coin rotations – where head/tail do not line up
- Dots and their meaning on pre-decimal coins like halfpennies and pennies

The group viewed several YouTube videos where the reasons for these errors were explained and what coin denominations and mint date to look for while noodling.

Several examples were circulated at the meeting of a wave gap appearing on the obverse side of the 20 cent (platypus) pieces. The gap is very small and requires a keen eye to detect it. (see photos above)

Attention among members was high as we conducted a Q&A multiple choice trivia quiz. This also served as an educational tool.

One new coin to watch out for is the about to be released the 2026 $1 coin. One-dollar coins have the Mob of Roos on the reverse (tail side). Instead of the normal five roos, the 2026 coin has an added roo making it 6 roos in total, marking the 60th year of decimal currency.

Keep noodling

Doug Smith

Collectors

Theme for April: **'Blue'**

What a stunning array of items were on display: beautiful English china collected over the years; a blue-and-white tea towel brought home from a trip to Wales; a patchwork cushion in lovely shades of blue; and a Geelong Cats teddy and cushion.

There was also the lid from a blue-and-white upright piano—unfortunately, we couldn't identify it. Other items included a lovely cake plate; a brooch that is now back in fashion; a very pretty pale blue fluted bonbon dish with gold edging; beads; a very old blue bottle; and a pen.

We also saw a glass bowl from a glass blower at Lake Entrance, a small German plate, and the blue elephant.

There are more photos are on the website.

Theme for May: **'Something that will give us a giggle'**

See you on 12 May.

Dorothy Webber

Community Singing

Kieran offered to play for Community Singing in April and used our Song Book No 1 for the first session. During morning tea, we had a 'jam session' with Jan and Rhonda which was great.

After morning tea Carmyl ably led us in several rounds followed by the companion songs of "Pack Up Your Troubles" and "It's a Long Way to Tipperary". Then Rhonda filled in at the piano using the music available in Song Book No 1.

Well done, Kieran, Carmyl and Rhonda! It was a different morning but an enjoyable one. Thank you!

The next Community Singing will be on Thursday 30th April whilst in May Community Singing will be on Thursday 28th May at 10am at the Hub at Cooinda.

Margaret Jenkins

Creative Writing

Our Discussion:

We continued the discussion around the use of punctuation, covering the little thing called a comma. I am not sure we were not more confused afterwards. This was because there are no hard and fast rules, but there are 10 common ways to use commas. Some purist grammarians can be strict about some uses. Even so, some of the conventions need to be broken sometimes. A great example is the need to include a comma in the sentence 'Let's eat Grandma'. Without a comma after 'eat', we are planning to eat grandma! We need the comma so it makes sense and reads 'Let's eat, Grandma'.

Our Challenge:

Having discussed some of the ways to use commas, we tackled a quiz on using commas correctly. This added to the conversation as we recognised placement of a comma can depend on the context.

Some of our Stories:

It is always interesting when some similar themes come up in our writing. This month several stories ended with an adventure about to start.

1. I/June found the message in a bottle:

The message in a bottle was a popular topic, varying from finding the bottle in a backyard that had not been there the day before, a bottle found in the river and a bottle found at the beach. There was also a story around a large number of bottles washed up on the beach. Here they were used to hide 'dad jokes' and encourage the local scouts to find them for recycling to raise funds. The scouts ended up taking over the role of cleaning up the beach after the summer visitors.

2. How could something like that happen?

A story about a collision at sea after crews on both ships were distracted by an aerobatic display overhead. A second story talked about a visit to Squeaky Beach and discovering the cause of the squeak.

3. The hand of fate stepped in to…:

This prompt was used in a story around a dream after watching an SBS series set on a remote Scottish island. The hand advised the protagonist that she had relation buried on the island but not in the church graveyard.

The story of the former prisoner making good after release is continuing with him continuing to find his place in the community. And we had a brief piece around the importance of punctuation, specifically on this occasion the use of a questions mark.

Prompts:

Our prompts for our class on 11 May are:

- I was wandering around the Op Shop when I saw it
- Confusion reigns supreme
- The hand of fate

I will be away for the May class, so I have also set a 'prompt' for the 8 June class:

- Open a book at random. Select a sentence/phrase and use this as your prompt.

Joy Shirley

Critical Thinking

This month started with an overview of science. Critical thinking requires disciplined thinking and access to evidence. Science is based on this approach, so it is valuable to understand it. Science is also the source of much of the evidence we need to make decisions.

The group then watched a video describing how *Large Language Models*, such as Chat GPT and Google's Gemini work.

We then continued to discuss more examples of cognitive bias and logical fallacies including the Halo Effect, the Barnum Effect and the Nirvana Fallacy.

Linda Tullberg

Demystifying Psychology Discussion Group

Last week our group explored four scenarios built around the theme *"the worst thing I ever did,"* prompted by the recently released film *The Drama*. Before we began, I reassured everyone that our conversation would not spoil the film for those yet to see it. Happily, that proved correct—no spoilers, but plenty of opinions.

Each scenario was discussed in detail. Interestingly, we did not dwell on the film's most dramatic element—the potential school mass shooting—but instead focused on the more everyday (and perhaps more recognisable) human behaviours. There was general agreement that three of the scenarios felt incomplete. We wanted to know more—always a sign the story has done its job, even if it leaves us slightly dissatisfied.

The scenario involving a person using their partner as a physical shield drew particularly strong reaction. "Unattractive" was the polite version. The bully's confession also raised questions, with several members noting we lacked a clear sense of consequences. And the chief bridesmaid's story prompted thoughtful discussion about how her cousin's permanent injury shaped her emotional response and near-withdrawal from the wedding.

One of our aims is to link these discussions to psychological theory, and this session provided fertile ground. Cognitive Dissonance was evident in the tension between how people see themselves and what they have done. Moral Disengagement helped explain how individuals justify behaviour that, viewed plainly, is difficult to defend. And Fundamental Attribution Error reminded us how quickly we judge others' character while quietly excusing our own lapses.

Overall, the discussion confirmed that while dramatic events capture attention, it is the smaller, messier human behaviours that keep us talking—sometimes long after the film has finished.

See you all next Month: Tuesday 19 May at U3A Room 1 – 18 Fawckner Drive Benalla.

Jane Rushworth 0437 621 575

Digital Upskilling for Lifelong Learners

This month saw the launch of our *'Fifth Wednesdays'* program. Morning and afternoon sessions on the theme, *Artificial Intelligence*, were presented by Melissa Antony from Community Business Connect. The morning session provided a very rich introduction to AI Chatbots, particularly ChatGPT. Melissa has a wonderful way of giving us lots of different ways of looking at often complex topics and describing ways in which to ask prompts which will help in all sorts of problem solving. Thank you, Melissa! *Bev Lee*

During the afternoon session, *'Unlocking your Planning Potential with Artificial Intelligence',* Melissa emphasized that while the possibilities with AI are endless, it is a computer, not a human, so what we get from AI is only as good as the information we provide. Convenors are reminded they can use AI to create

content and help with report writing. Melissa also suggested other uses for AI. For example, decision support. We can ask it to give us reasons to support our decision or ask it to pull it apart. Participants kept Melissa busy with very interesting questions/comments that we all had concerns about. We now feel far more competent and enthused to expand our use of AI. *Ruth Jelliff*

Co-convenor Dawn Stephens presented our May session, *'Making a Small Moving using your iPhone'* on Friday 1 May – more news in next newsletter. Our next session will be an encore session *'Getting More from your Photos'* on Friday 5 June. All welcome.

Easy Bushwalking

Wednesday 1 April Report: Bike Track and Blackboy Lane, Glenrowan

Fifteen U3A Easy Bushwalkers enjoyed an approximately 6km delightful stroll in Glenrowan on Wednesday 1 April. We all met at the Ned Kelly Information Centre (closed for renovations) before crossing the Railway Bridge and continuing up to the Primary School.

The Bike Track begins opposite the Primary School and finishes at Hamilton Park, 4km distant. It was a relatively flat track, with panoramic views across to the Alps early in the walk, leading to pleasant farmland, each small farm with a letterbox at the front of a long, dusty driveway.

The bus shelter at the corner of Blackboy Lane, Hamilton Park marked the end of the bike track, where most walkers opted to rest.

The remaining few turned into the Lane for a further kilometre stroll, discovering en route that the road is well named. On the way back to the park, our group paused for a break beside the trail, seated on the slope under shady trees.

We were back in Glenrowan Park by lunchtime. It was now quite warm, so after lunch, half of our group decided a delicious ice-cream from Glenrowan Providore was a great idea.

It was an enjoyable day out, thanks to our happy group of Easy Bushwalkers.

Wednesday 6 May – Beechworth and Surrounds

May's Easy Bushwalk will be an exploration of Beechworth and surrounds. Drive to the historic Beechworth Powder Magazine car park. After a look around, we will head down the road to Spring Creek Bridge (still closed for repairs) for some scenic views. Next: park at the Town Hall/Info Centre for morning tea in the Park. Afterwards, a stroll past the Beechworth Jail to Queen Victoria Park and down to the Chinese Gardens and new Bush Heritage Garden. Return to the Park for lunch. Afterwards, walkers are free to grab a coffee or stroll the shopping streets. Today's will be a short walk of approx. 5kms.

Meet at the Car Park behind Benalla Senior Citizens at 8.45am, to leave at 9am.

* Contact leader Bev. Thornell: 0447193244 at least 3 days beforehand.

Wednesday 3 June – Yarrawonga

Details have not been finalised but will be announced in the next Newsletter or by email.

Beverly Thornell

Exercises for Fun

With strong attendances continuing, Exercises for Fun is all about staying active, improving fitness, and sharing some fun and good company as we go.

Special thanks this month go to Graeme Greed - U3A Benalla's 'sound equipment ' guru - for working with Elly to improve the sound quality of the music played during our session. Thank you, Graeme.

'Back Flare-Up?' is the topic of May's '**Exercise of the Month**' selected from the wonderful 'Be Mobile Physiotherapists' YouTube site - 'Do These 6 Gentle Exercises' (Over 55's).'

Keep moving and have fun!

Helen Jeffree

Exploring the Universe

April. Storms on Mars. The Centre of our Galaxy & Artemis 2

At Exploring the Universe, we have different interests. This diversity leads to interesting discussions between our astronomers, cosmologists, space nuts and rocket enthusiasts and those who enjoy science because they have an enquiring mind.

There is no rain on Mars, but there are windstorms. A new scientific report revealed a significant finding on the former climate of the planet. Titled, "Huge Ancient Sandstorm on Mars Revealed in Rippled Sediments," it told of a time long past, when the atmosphere was thicker and the winds were stronger. We listened to a recording of the wind blowing on Mars, then viewed dust storms that covered the whole planet in, "The Mars Report July 2018." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W0EJ2DUf7g0&t=47s

"**The Hidden Chemistry at the Heart of our Galaxy."**. The Large Radio Telescope Array in the Atacama Desert of Chile, has captured the widest image ever of the centre of our galaxy. It spans an area of 650 light-years, an extreme area of complex networks of filaments of dense cosmic gas feeding massive stars that live fast and die young. This hidden chemistry will allow astronomers to probe the lives of stars next to the supermassive black hole at its centre. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I7PEFiQxAdA

We finished our 2 hours with a partial catch up on **Artemis 2**. For the other side to the happy snaps of the spacecraft and astronauts that flew around the Moon. 'Artemis Science. Visualising NASA's Lunar Flyby.. 'More to come on this one. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wdF4wyTarrI

Bev Morton

Family Research – Getting Started

The focus of our group session for April was researching onsite archival websites such as the National Archives of Australia (NAA) and the Public Records Office of Victoria (PROV).

With ANZAC Day imminent, when we searched the National Archives of Australia our focus was on military records of our relatives. Reading through these records online or by downloading them, provided an incredible amount of useful personnel information for our family research.

We then looked at a brief overview of the Public Records Office of Victoria which holds a range of records including wills and probate, census records, electoral and voter rolls, inquests, passenger shipping records, convict records, researching your home, researching land and property, adoption and divorce records and burial records.

While some of the records have been digitised and, are available online, the remaining records are archived and held at the North Melbourne site. It is possible to order printed copies of these records by setting up an account. Fortunately, PROV has created a number of helpful instructional videos to assist us to research and order family records.

For the remainder of the session group members were keen to focus on Shipping Records and the information that they provide when researching our family history. Working out the timeframe for our

ancestor's arrival is the first puzzle to complete before the search can begin. Many of the passenger lists for ships are available online. When searching it is important to begin with the surname. In some shipping records the passengers may be listed as Mr or Mrs so this adds an extra challenge to the search.

After taking up the challenge to search for an ancestor in the online Shipping Records the class members were pleased with the information that they found.

Our group session for May will focus on TROVE an online newspaper resource, followed by how to add resources to Ancestry Records.

Deb Saunders

Film Discussion Group

The class this month was small, but we were still able to have a good discussion on the films watched during the month.

REMINDERS OF HIM: Promoted as a *Dark Romance, Tragic Drama*, this was a little lighter than those words imply. The literary phenomenon from #1 New York Times bestselling author Colleen Hoover becomes a transformative feature film about motherhood, forgiveness and the power of love to overcome even the worst mistake. After prison, a woman attempts to reconnect with her young daughter but faces resistance from everyone except a bar owner with ties to her child. As they grow closer, she must confront her past mistakes to build a hopeful future. The performances were good and believable. Kenna's accommodation appears to be a cross between apartments and motels, with monthly rental. The residents form a community. One of the residents has Down syndrome and shows innocence with no judgment on Kenna's past. Overall, a good film, but a little bit 'soapy' to be considered good tragic drama. *We rated it as 3.5/5.*

PROJECT HAIL MARY: While promoted as a *Space, Sci-Fi, Drama, Thriller* film, it could have taken place anywhere. Science teacher Ryland Grace wakes up alone on a spaceship light-years from Earth. As his memory returns, he uncovers a mission to stop a mysterious substance killing the sun and save Earth. He must call on his scientific knowledge and unorthodox ideas to save everything on Earth from extinction. An unexpected friendship meant he did not have to do it alone. His new friend is Rocky, an alien from another solar system, on a similar mission to save his world. This is a great film around learning about others, trust, and care. The focus was the two characters in space, each trying to save their world. Through establishing communication links, they realise their strength comes from working together. The characters were good, particularly Rocky who was built of rocks. There were elements of humour, with an ending that served both worlds as well as reinforcing the value of caring for others, even if they are alien to our own community. *We rated it as 3.5-4.5/5.*

GOAT: This is promoted as *Animal Adventure, Computer Animation.* A small goat with big dreams gets a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to join the professionals and play "Roarball", a high-intensity, co-ed, full-contact sport dominated by the fastest, fiercest animals in the world. It has a great message about teamwork, working together to achieve a goal. All sorts of stereotypes are debunked, the goat is small but is still a strong player, strong players are both female and male, a single father, an ostrich who learns to fly to save the team and so on. *We rated it as 3.0/5.*

Joy Shirley

Garden Appreciation

In April we visited **Nellie and Steve O'Brian's Chesney Vale Garden**, with 40 people attending.

This is a fantastic garden built on the side of a hill. The design has been carefully planned to capture, slow, and sink rainwater into what was once dry, poor soil. Nellie has devoted 13 years of hard work to this garden—it is truly her passion, and she works in it every day.

Nellie kindly baked us a beautiful chocolate cake and doughnuts. Lunch at the Mokoan Hub Café was lovely.

May 28th – Two Benalla Gardens*:* Meet at the Benalla Botanical Gardens near the Royal Hotel Benalla at **9:30 AM**. We will be visiting two town gardens: Corrie Witlox, 3 Ibis Court, Benalla; then Margaret Walsh, 20 Parkview Parade, Benalla.

June 25th Bus Trip – Albury Gardens*:* We will travel to St Matthew's Church, then visit Father Peter's private garden at his home. Afterwards, we will go to Peard's Nursery and café for lunch.

Bus fare: $25 per person. Please pay by the May outing or leave your payment at: **Red B4 Book Shop** (next to Hides Bakery). Place money in an envelope clearly marked: *"U3A Garden Appreciation"* and include your *name and phone number.* Please let me know if you are attending either outing

Gwen Turner-- 0438 627 010 or gwenturner243@gmail.com

Garden Team

Bulging green bins were proof of progress, and some also took home superfluous cuttings and plants, so many shared the benefit of our labours on a sunny afternoon and Shirlie's pretty garden looked a little trimmer too!

Elspeth Maconachie

German

German-speaking is becoming free and without inhibitions. The report back segments on last week's experiences which begin each class are helping members to express themselves about various subjects. The group is making very pleasing progress.

Horst Gunther

Learning and Playing Traditional Celtic Tunes

The group has met twice during April and is continuing to work on several traditional tunes, playing Irish Whistle, harmonica, flute, guitar and drum, and I occasionally get out my concertina as well. Our drummer now has a traditional Irish bodhran (pronounced "bowran") which is a really good addition to the sound of the group. I will be away for a month or so overseas, but the group will continue on the same schedule with Jan Kennedy co-ordinating.

Tim Shirley

Let's Talk Books

Hope Easter provided lots of `reading' time for you all. See you all Monday 4th May at 2 pm.

Geraldine McCorkell

Mahjong

Our Mahjong players are coming along at pace. The present focus is on achieving Mahjong with three doubles. If this is not achieved it's a "False"

Mahjong, which attracts a penalty when scoring the game. Even though not all players are available every week we still had six tables this morning. Congratulations to our players who are going so well. Our photos show some of our winners. If you check out the boards, you might be able to check out the winning hands. We are grateful to U3A for purchasing the boards made by the Benalla Woodworkers

Kaye Blore

Meet and Mingle

At the April Meet and Mingle, members of U3A Benalla marked 30 years since the organisation began on 24 April 1996. Carmyl Winkler, a member of the memoir writing group, presented a history - *'U3A Benalla 30 Years'* –compiled from committee records. In 1996, U3A Benalla had four groups—Art Appreciation, History, Book Group and South East Asian History—with 24 members. By 1997, membership had grown to 30, with new groups including Computer, Bushwalking and Investment. The number of courses and activities continued to grow.

Some early members attended, including Shirley Kearney and Margaret Walshe, who are still involved. They recalled how, in the early days, most members attended every group because numbers were small. Margaret Walshe & Joyce Borschmann later started the Singing group after a walk around the lake in 2006.

John Avery, President from 2005 to 2011, oversaw significant growth in groups and worked to secure grants so the annual fee could remain at $30.

Early meetings were held in W4 at the old Benalla High School in Bridge Street. In 2017, the main venue moved to the Benalla Seniors Citizens' Centre in Fawckner Drive, now the Benalla Seniors and Community Centre (renamed in 2024).

Today, U3A Benalla has 459 members and offers 48 courses.

A booklet documenting the 30-year history was produced by the committee and shared at the celebration. The presentation was followed by lively conversation over tea, coffee, and a generous spread of homemade cakes and slices.

At the next Meet and Mingle on **Wednesday 20 May** at 10am, the guest speaker will be **Mark Beazley.** Mark is a professional grave digger, a retired funeral director and a marvellously engaging storyteller.

Mark's business covers a large geographical area, including Winton, Benalla and other local cemeteries. Mark has extensive knowledge of the legislative guidelines of the funeral and burial business.

He's a very engaging orator and not to be missed. All welcome!

Margaret Jenkins, Anne Nelson and Malcolm Sanders

Music Appreciation

'Strange harmony of contrasts, thus deliciously blending ……'. 'Art, too, with its many mysteries, blends all together ……..'.

So sang the painter Cavaradossi in Act 1 of the opera Tosca, as he worked on a portrait of the Madonna for the Church in which he was painting. His words could well be used to describe our Music Appreciation sessions where one aim is to provide compositions from a variety of musical periods whilst blending them into a single programme of harmonious enjoyment. This was especially the case in the presentation of our April Programmes. The elegance and expressiveness of Baroque music encapsulated in Guiseppe Sammartini's Concerto in F for Recorder, contrasted with the "iron man" nature of Shostakovich's 1st Violin Concerto (composed 1947) which calls on everything in the violinists' technical arsenal, as well as vast physical and emotional stamina; and Friedrich Gulda's Cello Concerto – a five movement work which transported us through blues-rock, Austrian folk dance, free improvisation, a courtly minuet, and a finale of bawdy polka.

Then there was Gustav Mahler's 1st Symphony--composed in 1888 - in which Mahler portrays how life is basically good, but comes with a mixture of sorrow and irony, the grotesque and the sublime, tragedy and humour. For Mahler life was often a challenge in overcoming the disappointments and tragedies that are thrown at you. The strange harmony of contrast was the youthfulness and lightness of Mozart's 3rd Violin concerto which he composed in 1775 at only nineteen years of age. Aristocratic, suave, witty, wonderfully melodious, this and Mozart's other four concertos for violin are dazzling gems that that can be truly mastered only by the very best violinists. Mozart intentionally composed them this way to highlight the technical skills of the soloist.

More detail can be found in the session notes which are posted on the Music Appreciation page of our U3A website along with videos of the recordings played.

Bill Squire

Page Turners Book Group

'The Seeker and the Sage' by Brigid Delaney

Structured as a story, the author introduces her readers to an easy introduction to the philosophy of Stoicism.

How can Stoic principles help us navigate the challenges of our divided, unstable world. Can the principles of Stoicism lead us to a peaceful, 'good' life? We are all going to die, so how should we live?

Anger, violence, events outside your control and consumerism are some of the negative features of modern life, but they have always been features of past eras too.

Be indifferent to wealth and fame; don't worry about what others think of you; understand that you can only change what is within your power to change; control your anger, try to maintain a relaxed state of self-control: Stoics maintain these are the behaviours that matter and will lead to happiness.

In this novel a traumatised journalist is given a dream assignment - track down the mayor of a remote and mysterious town whose citizens are reported to be the happiest people on Earth.

Journeying into a harsh and inhospitable landscape, she overcomes many obstacles before arriving in Silver Springs, whose citizens live according to the ancient philosophy of Stoicism and where she has been granted three days to interview the mayor.

During this time all of her ideas of modern life are challenged by the mayor who acts as her guide. After much personal struggle she understands the wisdom of this approach to life. An unexpected twist at the ending puts her journey into a new perspective.

Almost a self-help book but with the sweetener of a story line this book may appeal to anyone wondering what this philosophy is about.

Next month – *'The Deed'* by Susannah Begbie

Meg Dillon

Patchwork and Craft

Our two sessions in April have been very productive.

Lots of talent in our group and lovely work being produced.

As the colder weather approaches some of our number will be off on their trips North.

Don't forget to keep the fingers working!

See you in May.

Dorothy Webber

Play Reading

We had another comedy for our April play, *"And the Big Men Fly"* by Alan Hopgood. It is an Australian play written in the early 1963. It has been adapted to numerous media including a TV series and film.

About the play, Alan Hopgood writes:

"This play is quite ridiculous. It is a tall story. A yarn about one of our greatest national pastimes, Australian Rules Football.

But, as it is part of our national character to enjoy a yarn over a glass of beer, so I ask you to receive this story … with the same good-humoured lean against the bar that we know is truly … Aussie."

Its primary subject is a fictional Australian rules football team, the Crows (note: it is the 1960s so predated the Adelaide Crows). The coach of the Crows football team, J.J. Forbes, sends his assistant, Wally, out to find a new player for the big season championship which was to start in 2 weeks. J.J thought that they would never have a chance, as Wally couldn't seem to find anyone with some decent talent. But Wally does find someone – Achilles Jones, who can kick a wheat bag 10 yards. It takes lots of machinations to get him to sign up, using his partner to help. His inclusion in the team helps the Crows to reach the Grand Final. When he finds out how he has been tricked, he ends up leading the Crows to a draw in the Grand Final. Obviously, there are twists and turns along the way, but I am avoiding the spoilers.

There was a coincidence of timing as the play starts at the beginning of the VFL season. It would not be politically correct today, for example, using Achilles' partner to keep Achilles playing. But it did portray the era well. It was a fun read, reminding some of the TV series "Beverly Hillbillies" from the 60s

The members of the class did well in the characterisation of the various characters. It was a fun and enjoyable read and the ending could not have been better – an appropriate action by Achilles.

Our play for May is *'Happy Birthday Mum'* by Helen Wyngard.

Joy Shirley

Poetry Appreciation

We spent a very enjoyable couple of hours exploring Protest poetry, some in the form of song – quite a contrast to our previous discussion of poetry about love. We found that protesting at society's inequalities has existed through the ages, and covers a wide range of groups- calls to protest the inequalities caused by the Industrial revolution, as exemplified in the strident 'Men of England'; resentment in Ireland against British occupation – shown in Yeats' 'Easter 1916'; the tension in war between patriotic fervour and the destruction of society's norms, as exemplified in 'Beat! Beat! Drums', or the sheer horror of Wilfred Owen's 'Dulce et decorum est'. We also had a chance to discuss the wonderful poem 'Municipal Gum' by indigenous poet and activist Oodgeroo Noonuccal, as well as a couple of Irish poet Seamus Heaney's poems – 'Requiem for the Croppies' and the challenging 'Punishment'.

We have more to discuss, and so the theme of 'Protest' will continue next month. We will also share any poetic gems we have discovered since our last session.

Mary-Lou Keogh

Politics and Current Affairs

Less left versus right, more right versus wrong!

A dozen oldies gather fortnightly to share views on the current political scene. The scope varies from local potholes and poor Telstra coverage to the influence of the apparent madman currently running the USA.

Political viewpoints vary but the atmosphere of the group favours listening. Everyone around the table contributes, revealing a wide range of backgrounds and probing questions. I was encouraged by this sophisticated group, so I continue to attend. Many of our political "betters" would do well to attend.

Ian L Gill

Singing for Fun

The first Singing for Fun session for April was enjoyed by all those attending. Thanks to Kieran, Carmyl, Ross and Margaret for Leading the session, and to Deb for playing for the session.

On 3rd April 2026 Brian Greed, one of our long-time members and former Leader of Singing for Fun passed away. Brian was very popular with everyone in the Singing groups and had played the piano for Community Singing for over four years.

In the second session of Singing for Fun the group sang many of Brian's songs as our tribute to him including the "Changing of the Guard", "Sweet Caroline", "76 Trombones" and "Right Said Fred".

Singing for Fun was cancelled on the third Thursday as that was the day of Brian's Funeral which twenty-one members of Singing for Fun attended. Thank you to everyone who came.

The next Singing for Fun will be on Thursday 7th May 2026 at 10am at the Hub at Cooinda. All welcome.

Margaret Jenkins

Social Golf

The monthly social golf group met on Monday 27 April at the Benalla Golf Club at 2pm

There were 6 attendees and we completed 9 holes. We all enjoyed the walk around the course and the social connection after the game.

It is a very relaxed afternoon and there is no pressure on anyone to prove they are budding professionals!!

I look forward to the other people who have enrolled joining the rest of us as we explore golf and enjoy the company of others.

Other members are also welcome to join us for a friendly hit and giggle.

Next session is Monday 25th May at 2pm.

James Davey

Sustainability & Stock and Land

With one of our programmed days being Good Friday we had just the one session in April. With the world focussed on wars, seemingly here, there and everywhere, sustainability issues have dropped off the media agenda.

Stock and land issues have been focussed on the impact on farming of energy resources and fossil fuel dependent fertilisers and other Agri-products. It just shows that the world remains largely dependent on fossil fuels despite the inroads that have been made rolling out renewables; the transition will be long and at times difficult.

On a happier note, we looked at the recently published World Happiness Report which made for interesting discussion. Australia generally came in at #14 or 15 depending on the issue.

We also discussed a takeover of a large olive 'ranch' in California by a Victorian olive grower, Cobram Estate. Getting one back for team Australia!

John Lane

Tech Talks

At our recent Tech Talks we discussed a media article about Barry Jones - our former great Minister of Science. Barry is in his mid-90's and recently had an incident where the floor came up and hit him on the head. Amongst other things, Barry Jones was the first Australian to mention the words - global warming and climate change. This should give him some kudos when it comes to relevance.

When Barry was hospitalised, he reflected on some pertinent things. Of the 20 or so medical staff who treated him only 2 were Anglo. He asked how much resources the state should allocate to keeping people his age alive. He reflected on the lack of discussion about Science in Parliament.

Since Barry's retirement Science has been relegated off the front page, an unfortunate occurrence for us all.

For the rest of our session, we concentrated mainly on China. We watched an informal interview with a teacher whose parents moved to China in the 50's. They wanted him to be Chinese and did not speak English to him until he was 6 years old.

It is extremely interesting listening to a person totally proficient in both languages and totally at home in both cultures. Amongst other things he mentioned that during the hard times at the end of the 50's some people starved. He also showed us the Chinese equivalent of his aged pension card. He reflected on how public opinion sometimes changes government policy in China much the same as in the rest of the world. He also pointed out how the public collective consensus can be the same in most wealthy countries. For instance, parents in China now drive their children to school. No parent would dream of letting their child walk or ride a bike to school.

Does this sound familiar?

Neville Gibb

Train Buffs

Another interesting meeting today. The subject was information regarding travel quite a while ago, when there were a number of different rail line gauges. This meant changing trains to travel further.

The one relating to us was the Melbourne/Albury line, then on to Sydney. Different State Governments had different ideas as to what gauge should apply.

Then the subject of "WigWag" lights at crossings arose. Some of the younger members were unsure what these were. We also found out that the Silverton Tramway (defunct now) was actually a railway—different State, different terminology.

Another good discussion! It was interesting listening to members who worked on the railways years ago.

Anne Nelson/Joy Poole

Ukes4Fun – Just Jamming

It has been a quiet month for the Ukulele group. We have been using the TV more this month, cutting down on photocopying. This has been quite successful, enabling us to play more songs during our session.

Heather Wallace

Using My Android Mobile

In April, we focused on exploring Google apps. We looked at the range of apps that come pre-installed on a new phone, as well as additional free apps available to download from the Google Play Store.

A key area of interest was Google Wallet. We explored the different ways to store tickets and cards digitally, making them easy to access when needed.

We also spent time reviewing saved passwords within Google. While this is often easier to manage on a computer or laptop, we found that it can still be done effectively on a mobile phone.

Our sessions offer friendly discussion, questions are encouraged, and we use real life examples throughout.

Ruth Jelliff

Wine Appreciation

This month our intrepid group made the climb to **Red Feet Winery**, set high on a hill in the valley of the king. The cellar door is balanced precariously on the edge of a drop to the valley floor below, with commanding views to the mountain ranges in the distance. We bravely trekked to the cellar door and the rich reward of quality wines waiting for us.

Our hostess Meaghan generously shared her knowledge of the wine making process and invited us to put

our taste buds to the test, she even recruited some our crew to pour the tastings, a brave and perhaps fool hardy move. We in turn shared our skill at tasting and just generally drinking great wines.

We were encouraged to taste generous proportions of the various wines on offer. As always, the team responded with numerous purchases to try at home and perhaps share with others.

For lunch we chewed up some more of that most expensive of commodities, fuel, and attended Henley wine bar in Milawa. Ensconced under the generous shade of the old and gnarled peppercorn tree, the afternoon breeze gave us cause to consider additional clothing. Carolyn came to the rescue with blankets and relocation to the sunny side of the lawn. Food was excellent, service terrific as conversation and laughter continued unabated

It was great to see our recent past convenor Nicole in attendance, looking spritely even with her smile masked for safety. Brian was also back in attendance bravely manoeuvring his way to a drinking position and dining in the great indoors. It is inspiring to see them attending and we hope they can continue to join us well into the future.

Our May 15 outing will be to **Olive Hills estate**, 3221 Murray Valley Highway Rutherglen, a very interesting looking venue. Lunch to follow at **Poachers Paradise Hotel** in Rutherglen.

Usual meeting place - the U3A car park at 10 am – on Friday 15th May.

Carolyn and Garry Smith 0428765591

VALE – BRIAN GREED

It is with regret that we share the news that Brian Greed passed away in Wangaratta on April 3, 2026. Brian was a very intelligent man who had a wide range of interests and many friends in U3A Benalla.

Brian had been an active member of U3A Benalla for over 19 years. He was a Leader of Singing for Fun for most of that time, introduced many new songs to the group, and also wrote harmony for several songs.

Brian was the person who saw the opportunity to commence Community Singing on the fourth and fifth Thursdays of each month. He played for Community Singing from its commencement about 5 years ago until a few weeks ago. He just needed the name of the song and the key it was in, and he would play the song. If someone mentioned it was too high, he just brought it down two semitones and started off again. His musical ability was incredible.

Brian also belonged to and enjoyed many other U3A Benalla groups including Wine Appreciation, Investment, Meet and Mingle, Music Appreciation, Armchair Traveller and Stock and Land.

Our thoughts are with Brian's family at this time.

What's On in May

FRIDAY 1 MAY
10:00 Sustainability and Stock and Land
14:00 Digital Upskilling for Lifelong Learners

MONDAY 4 MAY
09:30 Exercises for Fun
10:00 Art Appreciation - Anita Laurence, Print Maker
10:00 Pickleball
11:15 Mahjong
11:30 Ukes4Fun - Just Jamming (Practice Session)
14:00 'Australian Shares and Stock Market'
14:00 Let's Talk Books

TUESDAY 5 MAY
10:00 Page Turners -'The Deed' by Susannah Begbie
12:00 German
14:00 American History

WEDNESDAY 6 MAY
08:45 Easy Bushwalking - Beechworth and surrounds
10:00 Play Reading – 'Happy Birthday Mum'
14:00 Cards '500'

THURSDAY 7 MAY
10:00 Singing for Fun
10:00 Using my Android Mobile
13:00 Patchwork and Craft

FRIDAY 8 MAY
10:00 Music Appreciation
12:00 'Chat 'n Chew' - Kim Wah Chinese Restaurant
13:00 Learning & Playing Traditional Celtic Music

MONDAY 11 MAY
09:30 Exercises for Fun
10:00 Pickleball
11:15 Mahjong
11:30 Ukes4Fun - Just Jamming
14:00 Creative Writing
14:00 Family Research Time (Room 2)
14:00 Garden Team

TUESDAY 12 MAY
09:30 Politics and Current Affairs
12:00 German
14:00 Collectors – 'Something which makes you laugh'
14:00 Tech Talks

WEDNESDAY 13 MAY
10:00 Recorder
13:30 'A Taste of Art'
14:00 Film Discussion

THURSDAY 14 MAY
09:00 Birdwatching - Shadforth Reserve, Violet Town
10:00 Singing for Fun
10:00 Using my Android Mobile
14:00 Executive Committee Meeting

FRIDAY 15 MAY
10:00 Wine Appreciation - Olive Hills Estate Winery/Poachers Paradise Hotel, Rutherglen
10:00 Sustainability and Stock and Land
14:00 Train Buffs

MONDAY 18 MAY
09:30 Exercises for Fun
10:00 Pickleball
11:15 Mahjong
11:30 Ukes4Fun - Just Jamming (Practice Session)
13:30 Family Research Getting Started (Group)
14:00 'As Time Goes By' - 'Things fall apart'

TUESDAY 19 MAY
09:30 Demystifying Psychology Discussion Group
12:00 German
14:00 Exploring the Universe

WENESDAY 20 MAY
10:00 Meet and Mingle – Mark Beazley, professional gravedigger and ex-funeral director
14:00 Cards '500'

THURSDAY 21 MAY
10:00 Singing for Fun
13:00 Patchwork and Craft

FRIDAY 22 MAY
10:00 Music Appreciation
13:00 Learning & Playing Traditional Celtic Music

MONDAY 25 MAY
09:30 Exercises for Fun
10:00 Pickleball
11:15 Mahjong
11:30 Ukes4Fun - Just Jamming
13:00 Family Research - Getting Started (1:1 appts)
14:00 Coin Collectors
14:00 Social Golf

TUESDAY 26 MAY - Newsletter Reports Due
09:30 Politics and Current Affairs
12:00 German
13:00 Family Research - Getting Started (1:1 appts)
14:00 Critical Thinking

WEDNESDAY 28 MAY
10:00 Recorder
13:30 'A Taste of Art'
14:00 Poetry Appreciation

THURSDAY 28 MAY
09:30 Garden Appreciation - 'Two Benalla Gardens', lunch at Benalla Golf Club
10:00 Brain Games - Neurobics
10:00 Community Singing
14:00 Car Torque

MONDAY 1 JUNE
09:30 Exercises for Fun
10:00 Art Appreciation
10:00 Pickleball
11:15 Mahjong
11:30 Ukes4Fun - Just Jamming (Practice Session)
14:00 'Australian Shares and Stock Market'
14:00 Family Research Time (Room 2)
14:00 Let's Talk Books

TUESDAY 2 JUNE
10:00 Page Turners - 'Fly Wild Swans' by Jung Chang
12:00 German
14:00 American History